

The author adds that the vesicating power of these insects resides in all the soft internal parts, and not, as stated by M. Farines of the common *Cantharides*, only in the soft parts of the thorax and abdomen. He found that the internal parts of the head and thighs employed by themselves were as efficacious as those of the body, but the hard parts as usual were destitute of any action. He states that this applies also to the officinal species.—*Comptes Rendus*, Dec. 3, 1855, p. 1003.

UNUSUAL DEARTH OF ALGÆ IN 1855.

Devonport, 19th October 1855.

MY DEAR SIR,—The present year has been marked by an unusual dearth of Algæ on all the Devonshire coasts, and this I have not only had evidence of myself, but it has also been noticed by *all* my correspondents, who are rather numerous.

A great many species, which for several successive years I have been in the habit of finding whenever I sought for them, with as much certainty as I should in going into my own garden to cut a cabbage, have altogether disappeared, that is, those plants growing between the extremes of high and low water marks. This unusual occurrence from the ordinary course, after careful consideration, I am inclined to assign to atmospheric influence.

The early months of the present year, not including those which we usually assign to winter, such as March, April and May, were exceedingly cold, and frosty nights were not unfrequent even in the latter end of May. Our lowest tides here occur at the advent of the new and full moon from about twelve to one o'clock. Plants beginning to grow *between the tidal limits* were thus exposed to a very low temperature during the night; but a very different result followed at the next low water, occurring at noon, twelve hours after. Here, those plants were subjected to the influence of a vertical sun, and these alternate changes from a high to an extreme low temperature, being followed up during many successive nights and days, had the effect of destroying them altogether. I am the more convinced that my views on this subject are correct, inasmuch as I found all the missing plants by dredging in deep water, and where they could not be affected by changes in the atmosphere.

Believe me, dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

Dr. J. E. Gray.

JOHN COCKS.

Observations on Echini Perforating the Granite of Brittany.

By M. VALENCIENNES.

The attention of naturalists has always been awakened by the curious habit of many Mollusca and Zoophyta, of excavating cavities for their habitation in rocks often of great hardness and of very different natures. It was at first supposed that these perforating animals only attacked the calcareous rocks, which led several people to think that the erosion required to form the hole was assisted by the action of some acid. It has been admitted of necessity, however, that in particular cases the animals only employed mechanical means, as the *Teredos* and the *Pholades* and even the *Sipunculi* were found to